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Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey

Perceptions of police performance in the territories, 2014

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... not applicable
0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
^{p} preliminary
^{r} revised
x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
^{E} use with caution
F too unreliable to be published
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

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Perceptions of police performance in the territories, 2014

Perceptions of the performance of an institution are one marker, among several, of the perceived ability of an institution to perform its duties and carry out its mandate. Negative perceptions of an institution's ability to perform key duties can undermine public belief in institutional legitimacy and can negatively influence the willingness to interact with or support particular institutions (Jang, Lee & Gibbs 2015). This is especially of interest in the case of the police, who are a particularly visible institution in Canada due to the nature of their work (Roberts 2007; Skogan 2006).

The rate of police strength, or the number of police officers per 100,000 population, is higher in the territories than it is in the provinces, a trend which has historically been the case (Hutchins 2015). Similarly, rates of police-reported crime and self-reported victimization are higher in the territories than in the provinces (Boyce 2015; Perreault & Hotton Mahony 2012). Though the work of police involves a variety of tasks in addition to responding to crime, perceptions of crime are one factor that is associated with the perception of police performance (Cotter 2015).

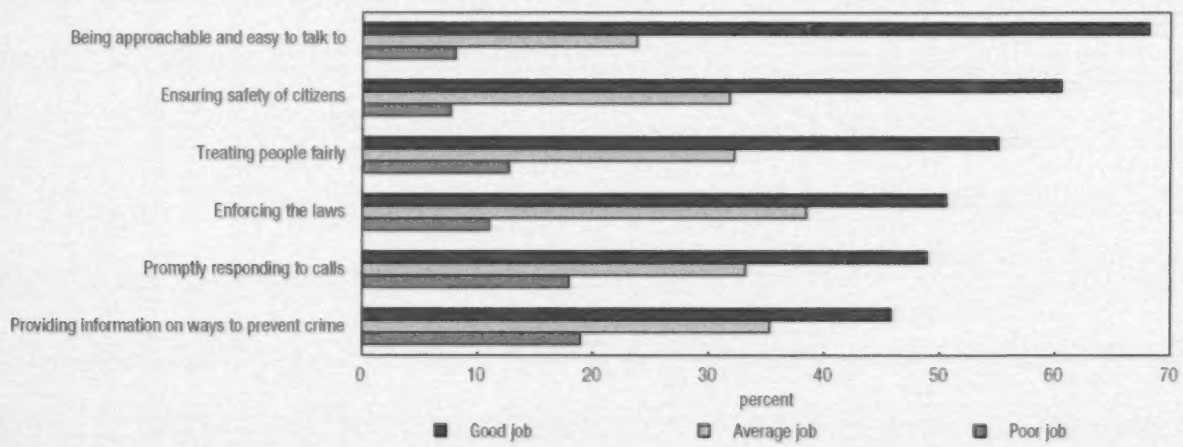
The General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization asks Canadians about their perceptions of police performance in the provinces and in the territories. This report examines the perceptions of the police among Canadians living in the three territories. Furthermore, perceptions are explored by territory and by key demographic and socio-economic characteristics to explore differences in perception among residents of the territories. Unless otherwise noted, all differences presented in the text are statistically significant.

Perceptions of police performance in the territories generally positive

The GSS on Victimization asks Canadians whether they believe police are doing a good job, an average job, or a poor job at being approachable and easy to talk to, ensuring the safety of citizens, promptly responding to calls, treating people fairly, enforcing the laws, and providing information on ways to prevent crime. In general, residents of the territories believe police performance is average or above-average.

The proportion who believed police were doing a good job varied somewhat by the specific task in question. While more than two-thirds (68%) of residents of the territories thought the police were doing a good job being approachable and easy to talk to, about half believed police were doing a good job enforcing the laws (51%), promptly responding to calls (49%), or providing information on crime prevention (46%) (Chart 1).

Chart 1
Perceptions of police performance, 2014



Note: Responses of don't know/not stated are excluded from the calculation of percentages.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Victimization, 2014.

While the proportion who stated police were doing a good job varied, overall perceptions were generally positive. For all six measures, a large majority of residents believed police were doing a good or average job. The specific performance measures most likely to be rated negatively were promptly responding to calls and providing information on crime prevention, with about one in five residents stating police were doing a poor job (18% and 19%, respectively).

Compared to residents of Canada's provinces, the relative perception of police performance among residents of the territories is generally consistent (Cotter 2015). As with the provinces, residents of the territories were most likely to state that police were doing a good job at being approachable and easy to talk to, and least likely to state that they were doing a good job of providing information on crime prevention.

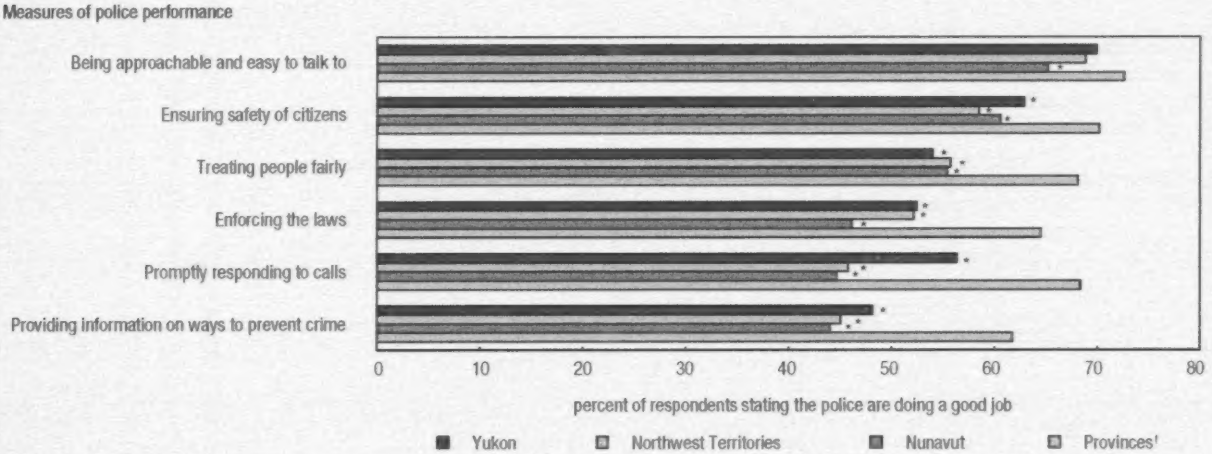
However, the perception of police's ability to promptly respond to calls differed. While in the provinces, responding promptly was the third-highest rated measure of police performance, it was the second-lowest rated measure in the territories. This relatively lower ranking of this measure may be related to the nature of the population, as 49% of respondents in the territories lived in a rural area compared to 18% of respondents in the provinces.

Perception of police performance consistent across the territories

There was virtually no difference in the perception of police performance between the three territories. The sole exception was the perception of police's ability to promptly respond to calls, where the proportion of residents in Yukon stating police were doing a good job (56%) was higher than the territorial average (49%). Compared to the Northwest Territories (51%) and Nunavut (54%), a somewhat smaller proportion of the population in Yukon lived in an area classified as rural (42%).

Compared to the provinces, residents of the territories were less likely to state that police were doing a good job in general (Chart 2). With the exception of the perception of police's ability to be approachable and easy to talk to in Yukon and the Northwest Territories, the proportion of the population who believed police were doing a good job at each of the other measures was lower in the territories than in the provinces.

Chart 2
Perceptions of police performance, by territory, 2014



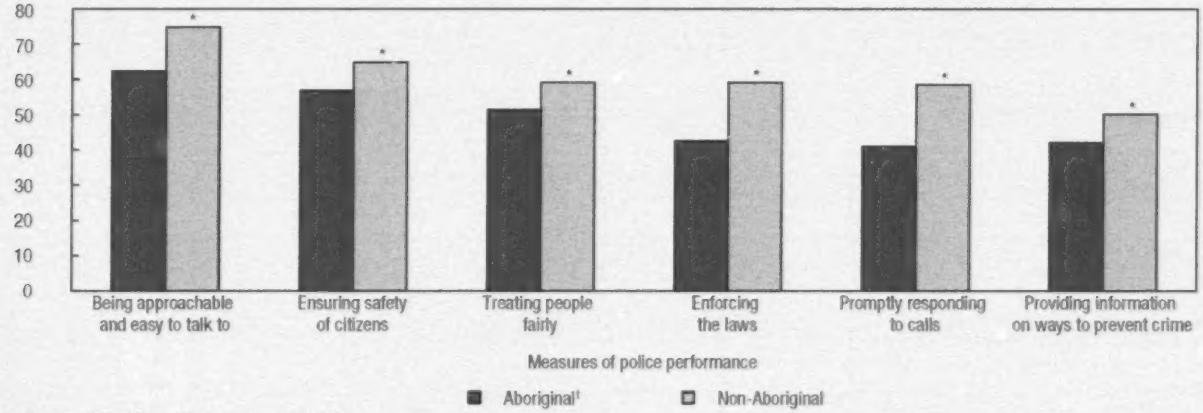
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
† reference category
Note: Responses of don't know/not stated are excluded from the calculation of percentages.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Victimization, 2014.

Aboriginal people rate police performance lower than non-Aboriginal people

Aboriginal people living in the territories were less likely to state that police were doing a good job at any of the six measures when compared to non-Aboriginal residents (Table 1; Chart 3). In particular, Aboriginal people were considerably less likely than non-Aboriginal people to believe police were doing a good job enforcing the laws (43% compared to 59%) and promptly responding to calls (41% compared to 58%). This is consistent with trends among Aboriginal people living in the provinces, who were overall less likely than non-Aboriginal people to have positive perceptions of police, but particularly for those specific measures (Cotter 2015).

Chart 3
Perception of police performance, by Aboriginal identity, 2014

percent who stated police are doing a good job



* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
† reference category
Note: Responses of don't know/not stated are excluded from the calculation of percentages.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Victimization, 2014.

Higher education associated with more positive perceptions of some aspects of police performance

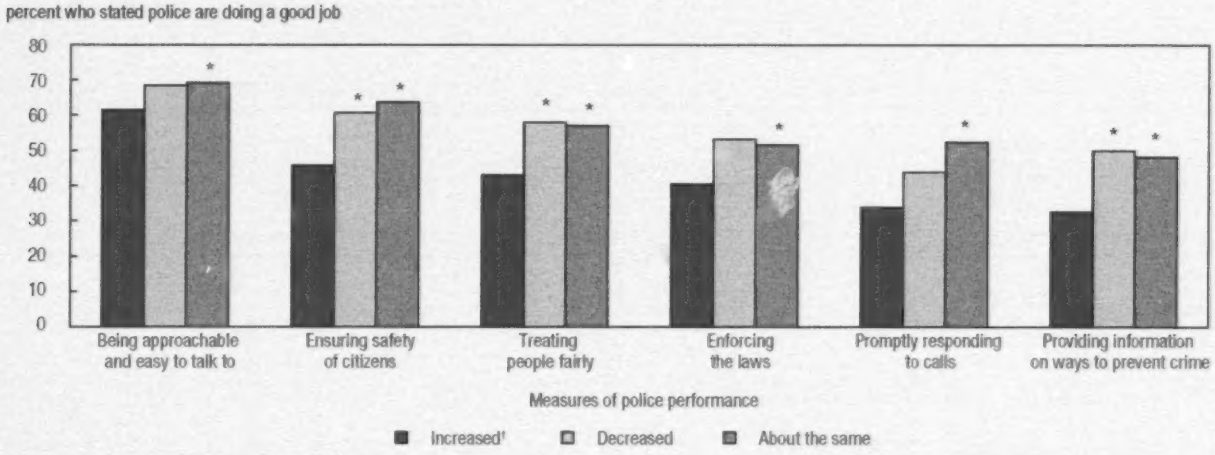
For some measures, level of education was associated with more positive perceptions. Residents of the territories who had completed a university degree were more likely than those who had completed high school or less to believe that police were doing a good job being approachable and easy to talk to, enforcing the laws, and promptly responding to calls (Table 1). That said, education had no impact on perceptions for the other three performance measures.

While older residents of the territories were somewhat more likely to believe police were doing a good job being approachable, treating people fairly, and enforcing the laws, there was little difference in perceptions when looking at different age groups in the territories (Table 1). More specifically, there were no differences between age groups in the proportion of residents who stated police were doing a good job ensuring the safety of citizens or promptly responding to calls. Similarly, there were no gender differences in perceptions of police among residents of the territories. This was not the case in the provinces, where women were more likely than men to state that police were doing a good job for five of the six measures of performance.

Residents who believe neighbourhood crime has increased rate police lower

Though law enforcement and responding to criminal incidents are only one part of what police do on a day-to-day basis (Boyce 2015; Hutchins 2015), perceptions of police are associated with perceptions of neighbourhood crime. Generally, residents of the territories were less likely to state that police were doing a good job if they believed that crime in their neighbourhood had increased compared to five years ago (Table 2, Chart 4). Differing perceptions of neighbourhood crime were not associated with changes in the proportion who believed police were doing a good job being approachable.

Chart 4
Perception of police performance, by perception of neighbourhood crime in past 5 years, 2014



* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
† reference category
Note: Responses of don't know/not stated are excluded from the calculation of percentages.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Victimization, 2014.

Victims of self-reported crime rate police performance lower

Residents of the territories who reported being the victim of crime in the past 12 months were less likely to state that police were doing a good job for all six measures (Table 2). While the proportion who believed police were doing a good job being approachable was seven percentage points higher for non-victims compared to victims (70% compared to 63%), the difference was considerably larger for the proportion of those who believed police were doing a good job ensuring the safety of citizens (65% of non-victims compared to 49% of victims) and promptly responding to calls (54% compared to 36%).

Aboriginal identity, self-reported victimization main predictors of negative perception of police

When socio-economic and demographic characteristics are held constant, two factors remain significant predictors of perception of police for residents of the territories. Regression analysis shows that, other factors being equal, the two main predictors of a more negative perception of police in the territories are Aboriginal identity and self-reported victimization (Table 3). Aboriginal people and those who were the victim of a crime in the previous 12 months rate police performance lower than non-Aboriginal people and non-victims. This was the case for each of the six measures of police performance.

While these factors remained significant, other factors which were related to perceptions of police did not remain significant when others were controlled. For example, while visible minorities and immigrants were more likely to state police were doing a good job, when other characteristics are held equal, the relationship is not significant.

Summary

On the whole, the large majority of residents of the territories believed police were doing a good or average job. Although about one in five stated police were doing a poor job promptly responding to calls and providing information on crime prevention, about six in ten believed police were doing a good job being approachable and easy to talk to and ensuring the safety of citizens.

Perceptions of police performance did not vary across the territories. The sole exception was the proportion of residents who stated police were doing a good job promptly responding to calls, which was higher in Yukon than in the Northwest Territories or Nunavut. Generally, residents of the territories rated police performance less favourably than residents of the provinces.

While a number of factors were associated with perceptions of police performance, when individual characteristics were held constant, Aboriginal identity and self-reported victimization remained significant predictors. Aboriginal people were less likely to state that police were doing a good job for all six performance measures, when other factors were held constant. Similarly, when other factors were equal, residents of the territories who reported being a victim of crime in the past 12 months were less likely to have positive perceptions of police performance.

Data source

This report is based on data from the 2014 General Social Survey on Victimization, conducted in the territories. The target population consisted of persons aged 15 and older living in Canada's three territories, excluding people living full-time in institutions. The number of respondents was 2,040 in 2014. A separate survey was also carried out in the provinces in 2014.

For more information on the data source, please consult the following documents:

2014 GSS: www.statcan.gc.ca/gsssafety

In this report, missing responses have been excluded from the denominator. For this reason, some results may differ slightly from those presented in other reports and in CANSIM.

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Table 1
Belief local police are doing a good job, by socio-demographic and economic characteristics, territories, 2014

	Being approachable and easy to talk to	Ensuring safety of citizens	Treating people fairly	Enforcing the laws	Promptly responding to calls	Providing information on ways to prevent crime
	percent					
Sex						
Male†	68	62	57	48	49	47
Female	68	59	53	53	49	45
Age group (ref. Total)						
15 to 24 years	64	62	58	45	46	44
25 to 34 years	64	57	51	46	47	38**
35 to 44 years	71	58	51	49	47	44
45 to 54 years	67	60	53	51	49	50
55 to 64 years	73	66	61*	59**	54	54**
65 to 74 years	79**	63	59	62**	53	52
75 years and older	66	71	68**	64**	57	49†
Marital status						
Married/common law†	69	61	54	51	48	46
Separated/divorced	66	52*	50	53	49	45
Single	66	60	56	48	50	45
Widowed	71	66	70**	64**	55	56
Level of education						
Less than high school	67*	63	59	47**	46**	46
High school diploma	65**	61	54	48*	46**	44
Post-secondary diploma or certificate	69	60	52	52	50*	48
University degree†	73	59	53	57	57	44
Main activity in the last 12 months						
Working at a paid job or self-employed†	67	59	53	50	47	43
Looking for paid work	60	59	49	34†**	39†	48
Going to school	73	68	65**	55	55	53*
Caring, Household work	67	60	50	52	54	50
Retired	71	63	61*	59**	55*	51**
Other	70	65	71**	45	51	46†
Household income						
Less than $20,000	64	71	65**	46	53	52
$20,000 to $39,999	67	61	43*	45*	43	47
$40,000 to $59,999	70	64	61	51	47	49
$60,000 to $99,999	62*	50**	44**	44**	42	39*
$100,000 to $149,999	70	61	56	52	51	43
$150,000 or more†	70	61	53	56	50	49
Visible minority						
Visible minority†	78	73	65	70	73	65
Non-visible minority	68*	60**	55*	50**	48**	45**
Aboriginal identity						
Aboriginal†	62	57	51	43	41	42
Non-Aboriginal	75**	65**	59**	59**	58**	50**
Immigrant status						
Non-immigrant†	67	60	55	49	47	45
Longer-term immigrant	82**	65	62	65**	67**	58**
Recent immigrant	79*	70	63	72**	74**	61**
Immigrant, length of time in Canada unknown	F	F	F	F	F	F
Total	**68**	**61**	**55**	**51**	**49**	**46**

† use with caution
F too unreliable to be published
† reference category
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.1$)
** significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Victimization, 2014.

Table 2
Belief local police are doing a good job, by neighbourhood characteristics and selected individual experiences, territories, 2014

	Being approachable and easy to talk to	Ensuring safety of citizens	Treating people fairly	Enforcing the laws	Promptly responding to calls	Providing information on ways to prevent crime
	percent					
Victim of crime						
Not a victim of crime in the past 12 months†	70	65	59	54	54	48
Victim of crime in the past 12 months	63**	49**	46**	41**	36**	39**
Contact with police						
Contact with police in past 12 months†	70	59	54	50	47	45
No contact with police in past 12 months	67	61	56	51	50	46
Satisfaction with personal safety from crime						
Very satisfied†	73	68	62	59	58	50
Satisfied	67**	60**	54**	48**	47**	46
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	59**	47**	44**	40**	35**	30**
Dissatisfied	64	38‡**	30‡**	34‡**	30‡**	40‡
Very dissatisfied	F	F	F	F	F	F
Neighbourhood crime compared to five years ago						
Increased†	61	46	43	40	34	33
Decreased	68	61**	58**	53*	44	50**
About the same	69**	64**	57**	52**	52**	48**
Neighbourhood crime compared to other communities						
Higher†	62	54	48	47	44	38
Lower	70	63*	58*	52	52	49**
About the same	67	56	49	48	43	38
Social disorder†						
One or more big problems	63**	51**	45**	44**	38**	38**
One or more moderate problems	65**	55**	49**	44**	41**	40**
One or more small problems	69	63*	58	54	52**	48
No problems at all†	74	69	64	56	60	54
Total	**68**	**61**	**55**	**51**	**49**	**46**

‡ use with caution
F too unreliable to be published
† reference category
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.1$)
** significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
1. Respondents are asked if the following are big problems, moderate problems, small problems, or not a problem at all in their neighbourhood: Noisy neighbours or loud parties, people hanging around on the streets, garbage or litter lying around, vandalism, graffiti, or other damage to property/vehicles, people being attacked because of their skin color, ethnicity, or religion, people using or dealing drugs, and people being drunk or rowdy in public places.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Victimization, 2014.

Table 3
Factors associated with perception of police performance, logistic regressions, territories, 2014

	Being approachable and easy to talk to	Ensuring safety of citizens	Treating people fairly	Enforcing the laws	Promptly responding to calls	Providing information on ways to prevent crime
	predicted probabilities					
Sex						
Male†	0.68	0.62	0.57	0.48	0.49	0.47
Female	0.68	0.60	0.53	0.53*	0.49	0.45
Age group						
15 to 24 years†	0.65	0.62	0.56	0.46	0.44	0.41
25 to 34 years	0.65	0.59	0.53	0.47	0.50	0.40
35 to 44 years	0.71	0.59	0.53	0.49	0.49	0.47
45 to 54 years	0.67	0.60	0.53	0.50	0.50	0.51
55 to 64 years	0.72	0.66	0.60	0.58*	0.54	0.54*
65 to 74 years	0.76*	0.58	0.55	0.59**	0.47	0.47
75 years and older	0.63	0.68	0.66	0.60*	0.48	0.43
Marital status						
Married/common law†	0.69	0.62	0.55	0.50	0.48	0.46
Not married or in a common-law relationship	0.67	0.59	0.55	0.51	0.51	0.46
Level of education						
University degree†	0.69	0.58	0.51	0.51	0.52	0.42
Less than university degree	0.68	0.61	0.56	0.50	0.48	0.47
Main activity in the last 12 months						
Working at a paid job or self-employed†	0.66	0.58	0.53	0.49	0.45	0.42
Other	0.72	0.65*	0.58	0.54	0.55**	0.53**
Household income						
$100,000 or more†	0.68	0.61	0.54	0.53	0.50	0.47
Less than $100,000	0.65	0.58	0.50	0.46**	0.45	0.44
Don't know/not stated	0.72	0.64	0.63	0.53	0.52	0.47
Visible minority						
Visible minority†	0.67	0.73	0.63	0.55	0.56	0.58
Non-visible minority	0.68	0.60	0.55	0.50	0.49	0.45
Aboriginal identity						
Aboriginal†	0.63	0.56	0.50	0.44	0.42	0.42
Non-Aboriginal	0.74**	0.66**	0.61**	0.58**	0.58**	0.51**
Immigrant status						
Non-immigrant†	0.68	0.61	0.55	0.50	0.48	0.46
Longer-term immigrant	0.73	0.54	0.51	0.50	0.53	0.46
Recent immigrant	0.74	0.53	0.56	0.61	0.57	0.53
Victim of crime						
Not a victim of crime in the past 12 months†	0.70	0.65	0.58	0.54	0.54	0.48
Victim of crime in the past 12 months	0.63**	0.49**	0.47**	0.41**	0.36**	0.40**
Contact with police						
Contact with police in past 12 months†	0.72	0.63	0.57	0.53	0.51	0.48
No contact with police in past 12 months	0.66*	0.59	0.54	0.49	0.47	0.44
Total	**0.68**	**0.61**	**0.55**	**0.50**	**0.49**	**0.46**

† reference category
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.1$)
** significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Victimization, 2014.